United Nations E/CN.5/2005/NGO/3

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
16 December 2004

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-third session
9-18 February 2005
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: review of further implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly

Statement submitted by Franciscans International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; and Dominican Leadership Conference, International Association of Schools of Social Work, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation, Lutheran World Federation, and VIVAT International, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* * *

* E/CN.5/2005/1.

04-66264 (E) 260105

Enhancing Youth Participation and Action in the implementation of Copenhagen Declaration of the World Summit for Social Development

The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development (1995) made many recommendations to include local stakeholders in "the setting of targets and in the design, implementation, monitoring, and assessment of national strategies…ensuring that such programs reflect their priorities." However, youth were not adequately addressed as local or global stakeholders in the plans of today towards the future of tomorrow. We recognize the presence and leadership of young people and believe that youth must be integrated into development policies so these policies can be fully effective.

Young people make up 1.2 billion (ages 15-24) of the world's population. All around the world youth need resources and an enabling environment to undertake personal and societal changes. When youth are integrated into the design, implementation, monitoring and assessment of national strategies, it not only empowers them as individuals, but also enhances the collective coherence of youth as a group working together for a better future for us all. Youth participation in decision-making further strengthens government's commitments to human rights and democracy.

Existing models of youth participation are quite varied, ranging from effective, to sometimes token, to often non-existent. Successful models of participation should be replicated or adapted to specific political and socio-economic realities, taking in consideration the challenges facing youth organizations and other development actors. Nevertheless, the existing mechanisms for youth engagement and effective participation are channels that governments and institutions can currently use to mobilize young people as partners in achieving the goals of social development as well as the Millennium Development Goals.

We further recognize the links between the Copenhagen ten-year review and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and emphasize that youth should be made maximum partners in the implementation of the MDGs so that they will be achieved by 2015.

Building upon the declaration made by youth present at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995, we emphasize the following recommendations:

Education

- Recognize poverty as it affects youth and consider youth as a target group in poverty reduction strategies. Education of youth is important in the provision of a long-term strategy to minimize the effects of poverty and hunger.
- Improve quality of basic education. It should not only cover intellectual aspects but also practical and social skills for development. Educating youth about the goals you have set for development will further energize development efforts.
- Provide education which stimulates all individuals to recognize their inner potential and makes them responsible for their lives and for the future of humankind.
- Educate youth on nutrition, health, sanitation, contraceptives, HIV protection, etc.

Gender Equality

- Provide equal access to secondary and higher education for women and girls as a form of empowerment to overcome societal imbalances that prevail.
- Recognize gender equality. Including young women and girls status as equal partners in youth development and empowerment is essential in overcoming the societal imbalances.
- Pay particular attention to the at-risk status of girls throughout the world and work toward resocializing boys to respect girls as equals.
- Provide social programs for young women and girls that link them with services and information, especially in times of conflict, when they are most vulnerable and most affected by social and economic problems.

Environmental Sustainability

- Encourage environmental sustainability, conservation, and protection of the environment for the benefit of the next generation.
- Encourage the media to play a more effective role in facilitating social learning about the environment. Youth can develop new forms of activism and bring new energies and perspectives to environmental affairs.

Youth Employment

- Improve programs to prevent youth unemployment, including better mentoring and training so that youth have access to information on market opportunities and their rights as employees.
- Empower youth in rural areas by providing capacity building opportunities and resources to create employment and income. Prioritize programs and funding for rural youth to be managed by youth and geared towards youth.

We recommend at the national level that programs and policies:

- Motivate youth volunteerism at the national and international levels, and focus on assisting marginalized and vulnerable youth to organize them to address their own needs and interests.
- Allow youth to participate in the programming and implementing of a youth employment network to prevent youth marginalization and poverty.
- Emphasize partnerships between governments and youth, including youth participation as delegates and representatives at international conferences and forums by LDCs, developing countries, and developed countries.
- Recognize the importance of nations enhancing local, regional, national, and global capacities to respond to environmental challenges.
- Take necessary actions to prevent infanticide, trafficking of children and the use of children in pornography.
- Provide youth with support to enable them to eradicate racism and xenophobia.
- Define the real capital of the country as human capital, and invest sufficient resources, especially in youth, to develop this capital as a fundamental of development, especially when it comes to health, nutrition, education, and job training.

When governments acknowledge youth as an integral element in the future of development and the establishment of a peaceful and just global society, they empower and recognize their responsibility, potential, and future role as tomorrow's leaders.